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THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AMERICAN AND BRITISH ENGLISH GRAMMAR AND SPELLING.

The purpose of writing this paper is to describe specially grammar, the usage of some tenses, articles, and spelling differences between British and American English.

Key words: grammar, spelling, comparison, differences, similarities.

Целью написания этой статьи является описание специальной грамматики, использование некоторых времен, артиклей и орфографических различий между британским и американским английским.

Ключевые слова: грамматика, правописание, сравнение, различия, сходства.

*England and America are two countries
divided by a common language.*

George Bernard Shaw

Language is the specifically human capacity for acquiring and using complex systems of acoustic as well as kinesic signals to express thoughts and feelings and language is used for the exchange of knowledge and experiences. The problem on this planet is the language systems vary greatly from region to region. The variety may be so different that one individual does not understand the language of a member from another region or country.

English, as we all know, is considered as the universal language for all the English speaking countries. It is spoken all over the world. However, you will also notice that people all over the world are using different types of English. Let's take a closer look at these two popular types: UK and US English.

Even if both types of English are widely used, there are some differences will be worth to identify the type of English that you are using. US English is what we know as the American English which is widely used in the United States. UK English, on the other hand, is known as the British English.

These two varieties of English are very similar that most American and British speakers can understand each other without great difficulties. There are, however, a few differences of grammar, vocabulary and spelling. The following guide is meant to point out the principal differences between American English (AE) and British English (BE). There are not very many differences in grammar. Rather more when it comes to vocabulary. Many of the differences in grammar is related to the choice of verb or verb form.

Use of the Present Perfect

The British use the present perfect to talk about a past action which has an effect on the present moment. In American English both simple past and present perfect are possible in such situations.

I have lost my money. Can you lend me some money? (BE)

I lost my money. OR *I have lost* my money. (AE)

He *has gone* home. (BE)

He *went* home. OR He *has gone* home. (AE)

Other differences include the use of already, just and yet. The British use the present perfect with these adverbs of indefinite time. In American English simple past and present perfect are both possible.

He *has just gone* home. (BE)

He *just went* home. OR He *has just gone* home. (AE)

I *have already* seen this movie. (BE)

I *have already* seen this movie. OR I *already* saw this movie. (AE)

She *hasn't come yet*. (BE)

She *hasn't come yet*. OR She *didn't come yet*. (AE)

Possession

The British normally use "have got" to show possession. In American English have (in the structure do you have) and have got are both possible.

Have you *got* a book? (BE)

Do you *have* a book? OR Have you *got* a book? (AE)

Use of the verb Get

In British English the past participle of **get** is **got**. In American English the past participle of **get** is **gotten**, except when have got means have.

In British English, 'have got' is often used for the possessive sense of 'have' and 'have got to' is informally used for 'have to'. This is much less common in American English.

He **has got** a prize. (BE)

He **has gotten** a prize. (AE)

I **have got** two sisters. (BE)

I **have got** two sisters. (=I **have two** sisters.)(AE)

I **have got** to go now. (BE)

I **have** to go now. (AE)

Will/Shall

In British English it is fairly common to use shall with the first person to talk about the future. Americans rarely use shall.

I shall/will never forget this girl. (BE)

I will never forget this girl. (AE)

In offers the British use *shall*. Americans use *should*.

Shall I help you with your work? (BE)

Should I help you with your work? (AE)

Americans use the present perfect tense less than speakers of British English and a British teacher might mark wrong some things that an American teacher would say are correct.

Did you do your homework yet? (AE)

Have you done your homework yet? (BE)

I have already ate. (AE)

I've already eaten. (BE)

The special vocabularies are used in AE and BE.

There are a lot of examples of different words being used in British and American English. Here are a few of the commonest.

angry (BE) = mad (US)

autumn = fall

boot (of a car) = trunk

chemist's = drug store

cupboard = closet

flat = apartment

lift = elevator

appy = diaper

pavement = sidewalk

petrol = gas/gasoline

rubbish = trash

tap = faucet

trousers = pants

There are British words which many Americans will not understand and vice versa. There are also words which exist in both British and American English but have very different meanings.

Spelling

There are other minor spelling differences between British and American English. There are several rules relating to spelling that are significant to note. First, words that end in -er in American English typically end in -re in British English (theater vs. theatre). Additionally, words that end in -or in American English typically end in -our in British English (honor vs. honour). Finally, one of the most common differences in spelling is with American English words that contain the suffixes -ize or -yze (also -ization). Such words are generally spelled with -ise or -yse (or -isation) in British English. As with any grammar rule, there are exceptions, and any writer or editor who often switches between American English and British English would benefit from studying these instances in depth.

Also, one of the little-known rules regarding discrepancies between American and British grammar is with verbs that end in a vowel plus 'l'. In British English, the 'l' in such verbs is doubled before the addition of a suffix that begins with a vowel (travel = traveller). In American English, this is not the case, and the 'l' remains a single letter (travel = traveler). This is an issue that many spell-checker programs will not catch, especially if the program is created within the US.

Some words, however, are spelled differently within British English and American English, depending on their usage. For example, while American English uses 'practice' to denote both the noun and verb form of the word ("She practiced piano often" and "The doctor's practice was busy"), British English uses 'practice' as the noun form and 'practise' as the verb form ("She practised piano often" and "The doctor's practice was busy"). Similarly, while American English uses 'license' as both a noun and verb, British English spells the noun form as 'licence' and the verb form as 'license'.

In many cases with these particular words, the American English version of spelling is acceptable in the UK, as likewise the British English version is acceptable in the US. Most seasoned readers have seen the words spelled in both the British English and American English form, and understand them regardless of which continent they consider as home.

Use of prepositions

In British English, at is used with many time expressions, e.g.:

at Christmas/five 'o' clock

at the weekend

In American English, on is always used when talking about the weekend, not at, e.g.:

Will they still be there on the weekend?
She'll be coming home on weekends.

In British English, at is often used when talking about universities or other institutions, e.g.:

She studied chemistry at university.

In American English, in is often used, e.g.:

She studied French in high school.

In British English, to and from are used with the adjective different, e.g.:

This place is different from/to anything I've seen before.

In American English from and than are used with different, e.g.:

This place is different from/than anything I've seen before.

The omitting of articles

Most phrases of British English have articles, while those of American English do not have. The “the” in the standard expressions in British English “all the afternoon”, “all the winter”, “all the week”, “this time of the year”, ect. are usually omitted in American English. For example:

The swimming pools are open all summer.

I'll be here all afternoon.

He has been gone all week.

British English will use articles in front of “sickness”, “river” and etc., while American English does not. For example, British English expresses in the form of “the measles”, “the mumps”, “the flu”, “the Niagara Falls” and “the Black Creek”, while American English says “measles”, “mumps”, “flu”, “Niagara Falls” and “Black Creek”.

However, there are exceptions. In some expressions, British English does not use articles, while American English does

BrE	AmE
Go into hospital	Go into the hospital
In hospital	In the hospital
At university	At the university

Sentences are as follows:

Next day, the rain began. (BE)

The next day, the rain began. (AE)

In future, I'd like you to pay more attention to detail. (BE)

In the future, I'd like you to pay more attention to detail. (AE)

Words Commonly Confused

In addition to punctuation and spelling, there are words that are commonly confused between British English and American English. The list below is from the Oxford Dictionary:

American / British
Jumper/Pinafore Dress
Sweater/Jumper
Eraser / Rubber
Pants/Trousers
Panties / Pants
Chips/Crisps
French Fries / Chips

A “garden” in the UK is the same thing as a “yard” in the US, and a “lounge” in Britain is the same as a “living room” in America. Such discrepancies as these abound between the two, and complete lists can be found online.

Words Not Used

There are many words commonly used in American English that are not used in British English, and vice versa. Words such as “burglarize” and “co-ed” are not standard in British English writing, and could confuse audiences when used without contextual clarification. Conversely, some commonly used words in British English can lose their meaning for American audiences (for example, “lorry” and “loo”). Anyone who writes or edits for both British and American audiences should study the extensive lists of words that hold different meanings between the two forms of English language usage.

An important point to make is that different doesn't mean wrong. Comments such as “American English is inferior to British English”, or “American English is better than British English” have no solid basis other than the speaker's opinion. The truth is that no language or regional variety of language is inherently better or worse than another. They are just different. Students will often have very firm beliefs on which English they think is better/easier to understand/clearer etc. While it may be true for that particular individual, there is no evidence to suggest that one variety is easier to learn or understand than the others.

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